RHS 413A From Genesis to Revelation: Bible Survey

Fall 2020
Tue 6:30–9:30 pm
Instructor: TBA

Course Rationale and Description

What characters and events constitute the major stories of the Old and New Testaments? How might modern scholarship help us interpret the Bible? This course provides an overview of the Christian Bible and explores its historical contexts and literary characteristics. Students will become familiar with the Bible’s main characters, key narratives, theological ideas, and religious practices that are crucial for understanding Christianity.

To engage effectively with many biblical books in one semester, this course will utilize digital media and interactive pedagogy, requiring students’ active participation in on- and off-line discussions and assignments.

Learning Outcomes

The course allows students to meet M.Div., M.A.T.S., and M.A.M. learning competencies #2 Scripture (“[the student] draws the wisdom of our forebears in the faith in Scripture into active engagement with emerging challenges.”), and M.Div., M.A.M #5 and M.A.T.S. #4 Cultural Context (“[the student] manifests the ability to know, interpret, and affect particular situations, values, and meanings through methodologically grounded historical, socio-cultural, ethical readings/analysis of the Christian or another religious heritage and broadly cultural-historical traditions within and around each of these competencies.”). This course also enables students to gain Ministry Arts and Public Leadership skills for service in #2 Preaching (“[the student] interprets Scripture in ways that generate new insights into text and context.”).

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will be able to do the following:
1) Name the 66 books of the Christian Bible in order
2) Read core biblical passages both carefully and critically
3) Draw a timeline of major historical events associated with biblical narratives
4) Distinguish different literary genres in the Bible
5) Recognize the biblical origins of theological debates and Christian practices
6) Discuss the complexity of the formation of the Bible
7) Compare different approaches to the Bible to foster a constructive biblical interpretation in today’s ministry
Assessment

1) Participation (20%): Punctual and regular attendance, careful listening, and active participation in class discussions
2) Midterm Exam (25%): ID questions and one essay, focusing on the Old Testament.
3) Writing Requirement (30%): Write a weekly one-page paper (maximum 300 words). Total 8 weeks. Various topics and engaging formats to be employed (e.g., timeline, news report, family tree, etc.) Papers are due by 5 p.m. the day before our discussion day each week. More details will follow.
4) Final Exam (25%): ID questions and one essay, focusing on the New Testament.

Learning Strategies

- Weekly readings: Please read each week’s biblical texts slowly and be sure to finish reading the assigned chapter of the textbook before class. Our weekly readings are not long but do require careful engagement. These reading exercises will help you write weekly papers and prepare for the midterm and final exams.
- Attendance: Your regular attendance at class is a key to success in this course. You are allowed two absences from class without any penalty. Beyond that, unexcused absences will incur grade penalty: your participation grade will be lowered by a third of a letter for each class missed.
- Discussion: Be vocal and feel free to jump in during class discussions if you have a question. When you respond to fellow students in class, please show respect. It is equally as important to listen well as to speak well. If you prefer or if you miss the chance to speak up in class, feel free to bring up your questions and concerns in office hours.
- Writing assignments: As the course title implies, our weekly papers cover a wide range of characters and stories in the Bible. To avoid producing any confusion or inaccurate knowledge, I encourage you to pursue precision when spelling the names of biblical characters and providing information on historical events in your writing. In addition, try your best to write with clarity and creativity. When drafting a paper, keep lay readers and the general public in mind and consider how to introduce your topic to them in an engaging manner.

Required Texts:

